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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR SPEAKS AT NGO CONFERENCE, AND OTHER TIP ACTIVITIES

¶11. (U) The Ambassador spoke at the "Hear My Voice" conference on human trafficking at Tel Aviv University on March 21. The conference, which saw the participation of GOI and law enforcement officials, diplomatic representatives from eastern European countries, and numerous NGOs, is part of NGO Isha L'Isha (Woman to Woman) Feminist Women's Center's "Hear My Voice" project that is funded by a G/TIP grant. The Ambassador's comments were very well received, with Government officials and several NGOs complimenting his keynote address and requesting copies. The speech is posted on the Embassy's unclassified website at <http://telaviv.usembassy.gov/publish/mission/amb/032107.html>.

¶12. (U) DHS/ICE officer Andy Yu also spoke at the conference and joined several roundtable discussions, and participants expressed appreciation for his insights into U.S. law enforcement practices to combat trafficking. Yu also handed out examples of laminated, wallet-sized cards ICE distributes to local law enforcement officers in the United States to guide them in recognizing and dealing with trafficking victims. These cards were highly sought after by conference attendees. A number of individuals told Embassy TIP reporting officer (TRO) during various roundtables that these cards were a great resource that they will recommend the GOI adapt and adopt. Several participants also asked for additional USG materials -- and more visits by officers like Yu with experience in the field -- to help improve their anti-trafficking efforts, including education and training.

¶13. (SBU) The conference reinforced Embassy ties with old contacts and introduced diplomatic counterparts from Croatia and Moldova -- two major trafficking source countries for Israel -- that we hope will prove to be valuable allies in this struggle. NGO representatives reiterated familiar themes, such as the need for shelters and assistance to labor trafficking victims, and agreed with the Ambassador's call for an objective, independent and comprehensive estimate of the scope of the trafficking problem in Israel. All NGOs that TRO spoke with expressed appreciation of GOI progress -- in policy, practice and attitude -- during the past year. Those NGOs noted breakthroughs such as the passage of new amendments to the trafficking law that criminalize labor trafficking, the formation of a national plan to combat trafficking, and the appointment of an official national anti-trafficking coordinator. They also spoke of areas that they strongly believe still need much work, such as effective implantation of the new anti-trafficking statutes. Several volunteered that Israel should be removed from the Tier 2 Watch List. Although these activists agreed that placing

Israel on the Watch List helped spur much of the GOI's progress in 2006, they voiced their view that failure to "reward" the Government for their considerable advances would be counterproductive at this point.

¶4. (U) The Ambassador's participation is part of the Embassy's ongoing efforts to combat trafficking. Four large trafficking-related grants from G/TIP in the past year, and five smaller PD controlled grants in the past three years, have helped put the TIP issue into the media spotlight. PD has hosted five DVCs and two speakers and approved seven International Visitors on the subject since 2000, and distributes DOS TIP materials on a regular basis. In addition to the Ambassador's remarks at this recent conference, the Ambassador delivered practical recommendations at a critical symposium to address trafficking in persons in July 2006 that was attended by high-level GOI officials and NGO representatives. Finally, TRO and PD meet often with anti-trafficking officials and activists inside and outside of the government.

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JONES